

Pros:

1. We would "steal the thunder" from Senator Symington by virtue of hitting the newspapers before his press conference does, thus offsetting some of the negative publicity (from our point of view) which we expect he will attempt to generate. This would be particularly so if we were able to attach this device to a high administration official, as distinct from merely one of the regular briefing sessions.

2. We would define the third country forces fighting in Vietnam in terms emphasizing their own national self interest and thus undercut the "mercenary" image.

Cons:

1. We would be throwing down the gauntlet with the Symington Subcommittee, in a somewhat contrived and obvious ploy to counter in advance his scenario, thus risking exacerbation of relations with the Subcommittee when we have a long time to go ahead of us.

2. We would be unlikely to get much favorable coverage via the device of a response to a planted question, because: (a) as a matter of actual result, this just won't generate much news, unless a major official in the administration made the statement; (b) the "non-mercenary" approach is nowhere near as news worthy as the "mercenary" approach; and (c) war moratorium publicity around the time period of November 12 is going to have a blanket effect on most other news anyway.

Before making a recommendation on this subject, I think you and I should talk about it again, probably with Ambassador Johnson. Then one of us can chat again with Mr. Lehman of the White House staff. In any event, we will want to respond in counter attack to whatever Senator Symington does say, and we have material available for this and will be prepared accordingly.

Attachment.

cc: EA - Mr. Green
J - Mr. Getz
EA/P - Mr. Neilson
P - Mr. McCloskey
H - Mr. Prentice

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State Dept. review completed

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CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE

Subject: Philippine Military Units in Vietnam

QUESTION: Can Philippine military units in Vietnam be described as American mercenaries?

ANSWER : No; not accurately so. A mercenary is someone who is hired by a foreign country to fight for a foreign country. The Philippine military units in Vietnam were sent by the Philippine government under Philippine command, to help a neighbor threatened by invasion. It has always been the view of the United States Government that the Government of the Republic of the Philippines dispatched PHILCAG to Vietnam because the Philippine Government considered that the Philippines had a stake in the outcome in the issue in Vietnam and that the dispatch of these Philippine troops was in pursuit of the highest policy interests and goals of the people of the Philippines.

QUESTION: Well, did the Philippine Government just volunteer to send its military personnel to Vietnam?

ANSWER : Yes. Back in 1964, the Philippine Government told us that it thought the outcome of the war in Vietnam was very much a matter affecting its national interests. It wanted to make a contribution to deterring this Communist aggression in Asia. In April 1965, the GVN specifically asked for Filipino help.

QUESTION: But was there a price tag put to the U.S. on that help?

ANSWER : No. Although the PR was willing to participate in the Free World defense of Vietnam, it wanted to be sure that by doing so it wouldn't dilute its own sorely needed efforts to combat internal insurgency and to foster domestic economic growth. The Philippine claim on our intention and our abilities to assist in internal development has been consistent and valid right along through these recent years irrespective of the dispatch of the PHILCAG unit.

QUESTION: Just what was worked out?

ANSWER : We and the Filipinos developed several arrangements whereby the two Filipino aims -- participation in Vietnam and internal stability and growth -- could be met. We agreed to equip three engineer construction battalions for domestic rural road and school construction in Vietnam. We agreed to supply two small vessels for anti-smuggling operations. And we agreed to help fund overseas allowances for Filipino military personnel in Vietnam.

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

FROM:

CFE

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

6 November 1969

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

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